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EDITORS' TABLE.

EDITORS: E. D. COPE AND J. S. KINGSLEY.

The bill lately introduced in the Senate by Senator Beck to provide for a National Zoological Park at Washington, "for the advancement of science and the instruction and recreation of the people," is certainly a step in the right direction, and one which might well have been taken long ago. As might be expected, the plan receives the unqualified endorsement and support of the Smithsonian Institution and National Museum, as indeed it must that of all scientists, friends of science, and the general public throughout the country.

The bill provides for an institution which shall be founded on a grand and liberal scale, and fully in keeping with the wealth, dignity and intelligence of the nation. The site is to be selected on Rock creek, just beyond the city limits, which would make the entrance to the grounds only a trifle over two miles from the Executive Mansion. The proposed site is one of great beauty, and even grandeur, for at two points high walls of rocks rise out of the picturesque valley to a height of over eighty feet.

The creek itself is a beautiful stream of very respectable proportions, describing a perfect letter S through the site to be chosen, and aside from its picturesque features it would afford unrivalled facilities for the care of aquatic mammals and birds of all kinds. Nearly the whole tract is covered by a fine growth of forest trees which, unless afforded immediate protection, is liable to be swept away by reckless real estate vandals.

It is proposed that the Zoological Park shall be established by three commissioners, the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, the Secretary of the Interior and the President of the District Board of Commissioners, and when fairly established it shall be turned over to the perpetual custody and care of the regents of Smithsonian. With the unrivalled facilities already enjoyed by the Institution through its multitude of correspondents and collectors, it would be possible to secure an immense number of valuable accessions by gift, and it is estimated that fully one-half of all the collections could be so obtained merely by paying the cost of transportation.

It is unnecessary to advance them any reasons why this bill should be passed, and the park established as proposed. We only allude to the great advantages to science and the general public which would inevitably result from the gathering together at the capital of the nation of a great collection of quadrupeds, birds, and reptiles living and breeding under highly favorable conditions. The time is fast approaching when many of our most noteworthy American quadrupeds will exist only in parks and menageries. The buffalo is now almost extinct in his wild state, and the Rocky Mountain goat is also certain to disappear in a very few years more.

Ours is almost the only great nation which does not maintain a national zoological garden on a grand scale, and we are glad to see that the idea of such an institution for us is at last taking tangible shape. It is eminently proper that it should be located at the capital city, which is now the scientific centre of the nation, and the Mecca which is visited annually by tens of thousands of citizens from every nook and corner of America.

RECENT LITERATURE.

THREE CRUISES OF THE BLAKE.¹—In recent years American work in marine exploration has been overshadowed by the prominence given to the celebrated Voyage of the "Challenger," while the magnificent manner in which the scientific results of that voyage have been published by Her Majesty's Government is unrivalled. Still, American science is doing much to unravel the secrets of the sea, and the investigations of the Fish Commission and of the Coast Survey stand second only to those of the "Challenger" in their importance.

In the two volumes by Mr. Agassiz we have a popular account of the results of the Cruises of the Coast Survey Steamer "Blake," which is entitled to rank with the accounts of Moseley, Spry, or even of Wyville Thompson, of the Voyage of the "Challenger,"

¹ Three Cruises of the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey Steamer "Blake" in the Gulf of Mexico, in the Caribbean Sea and along the Atlantic Coast of the United States, from 1877 to 1880. By Alexander Agassiz. 2 vols. 8vo, pp. xxii., 314 and 220. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. 1888. \$8.00.